

Primer on Transportation and Climate Change Issued by AASHTO

AASHTO has published an information report titled *Primer on Transportation and Climate Change*, which serves as an introduction to the issue of climate change and its implications for transportation policy in the U.S. The report:

- Summarizes the current state of scientific knowledge concerning the causes and impacts of climate change;
- Provides an introduction to climate change policy issues;
- Discusses trends in greenhouse gas emissions from road transportation;
- Reviews potential measures to reduce such emissions; and
- Identified issues for further research.

In an introduction to the report, titled *Climate Change, VMT, and the Economy: The AASHTO Perspective*, AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley states:

"In its July 2007 publication, *A New Vision for the 21st Century*, AASHTO noted that 'global climate change has become a political, environmental, and economic fact of life.' That report identified bold but achievable goals for reducing Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from road transportation:

- Support the President's goal to reduce oil consumption 20 percent in 10 years. Double the fuel efficiency of passenger cars and light trucks;
- Double transit ridership by 2030, and significantly expand the market share of passengers and freight moved by rail;
- Reduce the growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)—from 3 trillion in 2006 to 5 trillion, rather than the projected 7 trillion, by 2055.
- Increase the percentage of those who car pool, walk, bike, or work at home.

Horsley said, "Achieving these goals will require major efforts to develop next-generation technologies in vehicles and fuels. Current government forecasts assume only incremental advances in vehicles and fuels between now and 2020, with few additional gains beyond that year. Much greater improvements will be needed in order to achieve major reductions in GHG emissions."

He notes, "In addition to improving vehicles and fuels, it also will be important to reduce the growth in VMT as compared to recent trends. Between 1982 and 2007, VMT grew at approximately 2.5 percent annually—closely tracking growth in the economy and personal income, and exceeding the growth in population. Going forward, some growth in VMT will be needed to accommodate a growing population and a growing economy, including truck freight shipments. Therefore, rather than seeking to cut VMT in real terms, AASHTO has proposed a goal of reducing the rate of growth in VMT to approximately the rate of population growth—about 1 percent per year." Finally, he concludes, "It was interesting to note how the United Kingdom addressed this issue in its October, 2007 report *Toward a Sustainable Transport System*. The report found that for transport, supporting economic growth and tackling carbon emissions, 'does not have to be an either/or choice.' Likewise, AASHTO believes U.S. policies must be balanced in ways which help reduce transportation's impact on global climate change, but which also sustain VMT growth at the level needed to support a healthy national economy."

Copies of the full report can be downloaded by visiting <http://downloads.transportation.org/ClimateChange.pdf>. Print copies can be ordered from the [AASHTO Bookstore](#).